

Curriculum Vitae

010011001—Planetarium

At 11 PM on a very hot and humid Tuesday, Jimmy Hogg gave us an energetic, laugh-filled summary of his qualifications for work. His manic energy reminded me of a somewhat more articulate version of Keith Moon.

It would be unjust to describe his act as a stand-up routine—although he is onstage by himself and tells funny stories—because the stories are more than just funny. They have the eye for detail and the pacing that makes any story work, and his physical skills launch you into his world. He really makes you inhabit his stories as he performs. Then he yanks you back into reality with self-referential comedy.

I've very seldom seen a performer who was as "on" as Jimmy was this week. His prepared bits launched into improvised bits and back again almost seamlessly. He's a Fringe veteran, but somehow I get the impression that he's only starting to tap his potential.

Kevin Longfield

Cannibal! The Musical

M.P.M.M. Productions—Warehouse

Be sure not to eat immediately before attending this musical. While it is entirely entertaining in humour and circumstance, a scene within the first two minutes will either aggravate your gag reflex, or cause you to laugh so hard that your stomach aches (according to your 'taste').

Follow this unconventional love story, as Alfred Packer risks all to save his beloved Leanne, but in doing so leads a crew of miners to their untimely end.

Leading the cast is Dan DeJaeger, who portrays our charismatic hero. That said, it is Murray Farnell who steals the show (as Miller), with perfectly timed sarcasm, cheeky humour (of the PG14 variety), and with side-splitting cameos as the Sheriff.

D. Penner

Big Shot

Surreal SoReal Theatre—MTC Up the Alley

A small boy appears out of the dark complaining that life is too boring, and argues that everyone should have their own "action movie sequence" in their lives. And so begins this 75-minute one-man show that hurls us into the events leading up to an incident on a Vancouver train.

Jon Lachlan Stewart portrays six characters in this densely atmospheric play, including the boy, his shut-in mother, a recovering addict, a Japanese-Canadian florist, a transit cop, and a "big shot" movie producer. They all have their own stories to tell, and their tales (much like the film classic *Rashomon*) eventually dovetail-shuffle into an ending that will make your jaw drop.



Photo Credit: Diiverse.com

Stinging Nettle Productions' live music and luscious visuals create surreal dreams that grow like weeds.

Stewart is an engaging performer, and he had the mid-afternoon audience in thrall. Particularly impressive was his embittered Japanese émigré, who even told a great amount of his story in Japanese (don't worry, no translation required). It's a fantastic thriller, and it has more than enough intelligence and emotion to deliver on the action movie the little boy craves. It's a play that certainly lives up to its moniker.

Karl Eckstrand

Choosing Home

R-G Productons—MTC Up the Alley

Good drama relies on a strong, evenly matched conflict, and playwright Ron Blicq has this in spades. At age 7, young Rosalind was evacuated from her Channel Island home to escape the dangers of an impending Nazi invasion. She spends five years with a foster family who treat her very well in an idyllic country village. Then, when she returns home to Guernsey, she longs for her foster parents. A visit from them is the inciting incident that launches the conflict. Both sets of parents love her and want the best for her. Her biological parents are stiff and distant, but they are her "real" parents and they offer better social standing and material comforts. Her foster parents are warmer and offer her a more active life in a more engaged community.

The actors are very well rehearsed, and since he was also a WWII evacuee, Blicq knows his

subject. The devil, though, is in the details. The play simply has too many of them. For example, the foster father's name is Chipman, and he's a woodworker. He therefore has the nickname Chips. What should have been at most a one-sentence explanation for why Rosalind (or Rosie, as he calls her) calls him Chips, is instead a rather lengthy scene between Chipman and his lawyer. There's also a scene in which Chips tells Rosie about a prank played on a tipsy local. Understanding the prank requires one to know the local geography, and while Rosie would have known it well after five years, the playwright had to include this detail for the audience's sake slowing down the story and staining believability.

Finally, the characterization of Rosalind/Rosie on stage does not match the person we see on stage. Her foster parents describe a lively, fun-loving person, yet her dialogue and physicality show the opposite. The actor who played Rosie did a competent job and delivered her lines flawlessly, but the writing and direction did not seem to give her the scope she needed to establish the character that we could believe in.

All that said, *Choosing Home* drew a near-capacity audience on a very hot Tuesday afternoon. Any play that can do that has something going for it.

Kevin Longfield

